



Town of Concord, Massachusetts
22 Monument Square, Concord, MA 01742

Historic Districts Commission Meeting Minutes 01-21-16

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk's office, the Town of Concord Historic Districts Commission held a public meeting on Thursday, January 21, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room, 141 Keyes Road, Concord, Massachusetts.

Present:

Full Members

Terry Gregory, Chair
Mark Giddings, Vice Chair
Nea Glenn, Secretary
Justin King

Associate Members

Luis Berrizbeitia
Kathleen Chartener
Satish Dhingra
Peter Nobile

Lara Kritzer, Senior Planner

Chair Terry Gregory called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Voting Members for the meeting were Mr. Dhingra, Mr. Giddings, Ms. Glenn, Mr. Gregory, and Mr. King.

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

Barretts Mill Farm, 449 Barretts Mill Road, Barrett Farm Historic District, to construct greenhouse and bench

Mr. Giddings recused himself from this discussion as he is an abutter to the property. Mr. Berrizbeitia was appointed to vote in his place.

Mr. Fiori was not able to attend the meeting but had sent a letter which was read into the file at this time. Mr. Fiori noted that the property was a 20th century landscape and felt that the site's primary strength was in how it had been manipulated by people for the last century. He supported the Applicant's proposal for the site.

Applicants Lise Holdorf and Melissa Maxwell, Barrett Mill Farm, were present for the continued discussion on their application to install a second greenhouse on the farm. It was noted that a site visit had been held since the last meeting to allow the Members a chance to review the proposed location. The Commission also noted that it had received many letters of support for the project since the last meeting.

A Commission Member asked about the new bench noted in the application. The Applicants explained that an artist was constructing a bench for the site and that since their initial application, it had been decided to make the bench smaller and more moveable. The Applicants explained the rustic design of the bench and how it would have a branch above it. They hoped to install it near the front of the site but had not picked a specific location.

A Commission Member asked if the Applicants had thought any more about screening the new greenhouse. The Applicants stated that they were open to any suggestions and ideas for plantings. The Applicants planned to work with Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen and Natural Resources Director Delia Kaye on this project and to identify the ornamental plantings. The Commission Member thought that the proposed greenhouse location was as good as any on the site. A second Member stated that he had spoken with Ms. Kaye who was supportive of adding native plantings to help screen the structure. A third Member stated that her only question had been about the siting of the greenhouse. Following the site visit, she recognized that the septic system prevented the Applicants from locating the greenhouse behind the main house, and thought that the proposed location was the best possible one.

The Chair opened the discussion to Public Comment. Paul Gromer, 521 Barrett's Mill Road, stated that the Barrett Mill Farm was the heart and soul of the Historic District. He was very supportive of the project and thought that this site made the District unique.

Mr. King moved to approve the installation of a 26'x48' plexiglass and metal frame green house in the location as proposed with the condition that additional screening of the applicant's choice will be installed in the gap in the tree line to further screen the structure from Barrett's Mill Road. Ms. Glenn seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Rotary Club of Concord, 12 Main Street, Monument Square/North Bridge Historic District, to remove existing granite and paving and install new USS Concord Bell memorial

The Concord Rotary Club had contacted the Commission prior to the meeting to request to continue their discussion until the February 4 meeting to allow additional time to finish the revised designs for the space. It was noted that the Town was concerned with preserving the location as a community gathering space. Members agreed that a clear design which preserved this character was important. It was suggested that Staff share any correspondence received from the community with the Rotary Club and ask anyone interested in the project to attend the next meeting.

A Commission Member stated that he had been approached with questions about whether the area would still be a gathering space. He had heard from people who were concerned that this area continue to be an open and easily accessible space. Members agreed that the flow, ease of use, seats, and gathering opportunities were important here.

NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Stacey Davis, 52 Bow Street, Monument Square/North Bridge Historic District, to install trellis

Owners Stacey and Richard Koch presented their application to install trellises along their right property line. The Owners explained that the trellises had been installed without approval about two years earlier and were used to support plantings. They had not realized that they needed to get approval for trellises as they thought of them as temporary installations and they had installed them to help screen the construction underway at the time at their adjacent neighbor's home. They had a lot of gardens on the property and the trellises would be hidden by the plants during the summer. The trellises varied in height from 4' to 5' and were constructed of metal pipes, wire and wood. The Owners wished that the trellises were not metal but did not believe that they were inappropriate to the site. Photos of the installed trellises were presented for review.

A Commission Member explained that the HDC became concerned when changes were made without approval and noted that the Commission must review those changes as if they had not already been installed. The trellises would be considered as a new application and he thought that the Commission should see plans and more details about their design. Another Member thought that this was a point well taken and suggested that the Commission consider whether the constructed trellises would have been approved if the application had come in earlier. A third Member stated that he would not have wanted to see metal trellises on the site. The Owner explained that by using metal, the trellis could be thin and less visible. He thought that it gave the property a modern aesthetic. The Owner agreed that the design should be based on a sense of the place and context and was supportive of the goals of the Commission.

It was noted that this trellises design could be easily removed. A Commission Member suggested that the trellises come down in the winter and that the discussion could be continued in the spring. The Owners agreed that they could be removed, but were concerned that they would lose some of the plantings that climbed it. A second Member suggested that a site visit would be helpful for the Commission to better understand the context. The Owners noted that other neighbors had a lot of play equipment and signs out. It was noted that the trellises could be considered temporary if they were removed during the winter. It was further noted that the hogwire used in the trellises gave them an agricultural appearance.

A Commission Member stated that she appreciated what the Owners were trying to do and thought that the metal trellises were less visible than wood ones would be. A second Member asked if it would damage the plants to remove the trellises. The Owner stated that it would. Another Member asked if the wood pieces were teak. The Owner stated that each trellis was constructed using 2'x4' pressure treated wood installed over anodized metal frames with hogwire at the center.

A Commission Member stated that he was fine with the trellises as installed. He was not happy that this application was being reviewed after the fact but thought that the change was small and temporary in nature. Other Members agreed that it was a modern interpretation of a traditional element that was very transparent and could be considered similar to other lawn furniture. A second Member thought that the trellises could be improved by making them of natural elements similar to those used on the house. A third Member asked if the trellises were anchored into the ground. The Owner stated that they were anchored with rebar because had had been concerned that they might move over time. The Owner had used 3" rebar to anchor the fixtures. The Commission Member felt that these anchors showed that the trellises were not temporary structures and did not think that the shiny metal frames were appropriate. He also preferred a natural wood trellis.

A Commission Member suggested that the Owners put together a simple plan to show where the trellises were located and give a better sense of their location and visibility. Another Member stated that he was not sure that he could approve the trellises as currently designed and installed. A third Member asked if more wood could be applied to the frames and the Owner thought that it was possible. Members discussed whether it would help to paint the metal black or install wood around it. The Owners thought that it might look too bulky if they wrapped the vertical metal supports in wood.

A Commission Member thought that the trellises would look better if the metal was painted a flat black. The Owner offered to do one and let the Commission take a look. Another Member thought that a site visit would be helpful. Members discussed whether a matte black or dark green paint would help to hide the structure and asked the Owner to postpone any painting until after the site visit. A site visit was scheduled for Thursday, February 4, at 8:00 a.m. Further discussion was continued to the February 4th meeting.

Other Business

Preservation Awards Discussion – Annette Bagley, Concord Historical Commission, explained that the CHC was initiating a first annual Preservation Awards program. Awards would be handed out in six categories for any projects completed within the last 6 years. The CHC would be accepting applications through February 28 and planned to give out the award in May in honor of the National Historic Preservation month. She presented a handout which included both the application and explained that it was also available online.

Mr. Giddings asked if Ms. Bagley could give them an example of a potential application. Ms. Bagley stated that none had been submitted yet, but that an application could be for an addition, a new fence, landscape preservation, etc. The CHC had ideas but was looking for more ideas within the community. She added that this would be an honorary and not a monetary award and explained that they might award multiple awards a year depending on the applications. Anyone doing work in Concord was eligible for the award.

Mr. Berrizbeitia asked if the HDC needed to vote on a nomination. Ms. Bagley answered that the nominations could come from the Commission as a whole or from individuals. She stated that the CHC was expecting more individual nominations for now and would be making the decision on whom to present awards to. It was suggested that the CHC do outreach to area real estate offices and the garden club for more nominations.

Discussion of Design of 55 Estabrook Road Stone Walls – Engineer Mike McGrath and Contractor Kevin Hurley were present on behalf of the owner to discuss the recent construction of stone walls around the property. The Commission had sent a violation letter to the owner prior to the meeting as the stone walls then under construction did not match the plans approved by the HDC. The Engineer agreed that what was being built was more formal than he had visualized. A Commission Member noted that the walls were rectangular in form versus the farmer's wall that had been approved. The Engineer explained that the owner was in the process of dividing up the property and had planned to use the wall as a dividing line. The Contractor showed Members the revised wall and site plans and photos of the completed wall. He explained that he had been paying attention to stone walls around Concord and noted the National Park's wall across the street which was also rectangular. He thought that the Commission could find the new wall to be appropriate based on the National Park walls.

Members noted that the Commission had been very specific in their approval of the new walls that they must be more informal than the walls across the front façade of the property and not match those walls. The new walls, though, are rectangular walls identical to those running along the front property line. A Commission Member asked where the breakdown in communication had taken place. The Engineer was not sure and did not know why their stone masons had not followed the approved plan. Another Member asked if a sample section had been constructed. The Engineer answered no, that they had believed that the mason would follow the approved plans. The first Member expressed concern with the changes to the approved design and felt that it violated the point of the Commission's review.

The Engineer felt that they had two options for dealing with the change in the design. The Owner could revise the lot lines for the property and put the new walls outside of the District; or the Commission could approve the stone walls as constructed. He felt that it would be impractical to rebuild the walls to match the approved designs. A Commission Member noted that the HDC had spent a lot of time discussing the need for the new walls to be softer, less formal wall and that both sides had agreed to that design before the approval was issued. A Second Member felt that the new walls were constructed to be too perfect and noted that the discussion for the approved design had stressed the need for more irregularity and a less finished appearance for the new walls. She felt that the Commission could not have been clearer on their expectations for the appearance of the finished walls. A third Member agreed and had reviewed these discussions in the minutes. He thought that the minutes left no doubts as to what was expected and noted that the new walls exactly matched the one wall which the Commission had not liked.

A Commission Member expressed concern that the Owner had simply changed his mind and decided not to follow the approval. He asked why the wall could not be rebuilt. Another Member noted that incorrect work had been redone or revised at other sites. A third Member asked about the Owner's contract with the stone wall builders and whether they had received a copy of the approved plans and Certificate of Appropriateness. Members agreed that the approved plans were very clear as to how the wall should be built and had not been followed.

The Contractor and Engineer noted that the stone wall was essentially complete. Commission Members agreed that the stone walls as

constructed were in violation of the Certificate of Appropriateness for their installation. Mr. Giddings moved to draft a letter of violation for the construction of the stone walls along the right property line at 55 Estabrook Road. Mr. Berrizbeitia seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The Engineer and Contractor stated that they would look further into this problem and would meet with the Owner. They agreed to come back to the Commission in March or April.

Letter to Historic Districts Residents – Members discussed sending a friendly letter reminding homeowners about the requirements of the Historic Districts. Staff was asked to develop a draft and check on how much postage might cost. A Commission Member asked about the possibility of developing a brochure and Staff explained that the HDC would be included in the Town's upcoming permitting guide. It was suggested that a letter also go out to local real estate offices and Members discussed whether this should be the same or a different letter.

North Bridge Sign in Concord Center – Mr. Gregory noted that there was a painted wood sign for the North Bridge located in front of the Old Hill Burying Ground that was in bad condition and should be removed. Staff noted that this had been discussed in the past and agreed to check into this question further.

Ms. Glenn moved to adjourn. Mr. King seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.